

## INTRODUCTION

SATIRE is a paradox. It is poetry which denies that it *is* poetry. It is a moralizing rant which is sucked into prurience about and even complicity with the vice and folly it rails against. It is a cutting-edge slice-of-life which is obsessively self-conscious about its own literary traditions. It is free speech which tells it how it is but is always constrained by limitations on its liberty. Yet even by these standards, Horace's satire is exceptionally paradoxical. It is a finely wrought, pared-down form of a genre whose very essence is bloatedness, disorder, rough edges, a literary equivalent of the messy, chaotic world it evokes. It is a gentle, detached take on the genre of ranting, even bigoted invective, and one which advocates the virtues of moderation with fanatical extremism. In order to gain a sense of how Horace fits, or figured himself as fitting, into the traditions of Roman satire, it will be worth reflecting a little on the history and nature of Roman satire,<sup>1</sup> before turning to Horace's engagement—and sometimes his refusal to engage—with various themes and issues.

### *A brief history of satire*

Roman satire has points of contact with various Greek genres—the invective *iamboi* of Archilochus and Hipponax, which Horace remodelled more directly in the *Epodes*; the socially and politically engaged Old Comedy of Aristophanes and his rivals, explicitly cited as a forebear at the opening of *Sat.* 1.4; the philosophical sermons, or diatribes, of Cynic philosophers, particularly influential on *Sat.* 1.1–3—but, unlike epic, tragedy, lyric, and every other genre, it was neither invented by the Greeks nor did they provide its canonical poets. Satire was a quintessentially Roman genre, 'entirely ours' (*tota nostra*), as Quintilian famously called it. This was not merely a paragraph of literary history or a badge of national pride, but suffused the very ethos of satire, linking to its rejection of pretension, luxury, and all the corrupting influences so readily attributed to the Greeks and its concomitant assertion of simple Roman values. When the Roman god Quirinus warns Horace not to use Greek words in his satires, he is making a point quite as ideologically loaded as when Juvenal's bigot Umbricius rails against the 'Greek city' which he claims Rome had become.

Satire's self-consciousness extends to a preoccupation with its own name. The alternative etymologies of *satura* given by the fourth-century AD grammarian Diomedes all (except for the improbable link with satyrs) relate to fullness, even bloatedness, and to an ugly, messy heterogeneity: he derives it from either a composite legal bill (*lex satura*), or a plate full of mixed dishes to be offered to the gods (*lanx satura*), or a sort of stuffed sausage or black pudding (*farciimen*). These etymologies seem to reflect much of satire's self-construction as a genre which is stuffed full of humanity with all its fears, desires, vices, and follies, variegated content which denies it the purity and unity associated with more respectable types of literature. Moreover, the connection with food cannot be coincidental, since satire is obsessed with the low bodily functions and desires which find no place in higher genres but which form the very essence, the stuffing of the sausage that is satire. As Alvin Kernan put it in a study of English satire which revolutionized approaches to its Roman predecessor, 'man is caught in his animal functions of eating, drinking, lusting, displaying his body, copulating, evacuating, scratching'.<sup>2</sup> Food in particular is a recurrent motif, especially in Horace's second book of *Satires*. It

represents the lowest, most corporeal and sensual part of human nature, while excessive devotion to consuming, preparing, or studying the science of it is emblematic of the decay and false values of society (esp. in *Sat.* 2.2, 2.4, and 2.8); at the other extreme, the honest, simple fare which is the mark of Rome's rustic past, and which Horace still enjoys in the seclusion of his Sabine farm, stands as a marker for a more honest, simple way of life, as Horace recalls Ofellus arguing in 2.2. Satire abounds in images of the bloatedness and excess which it condemns but also embodies. Yet Horace's avowed attempt to compose finely honed, scaled-down satire in accordance with the poetic principles of Callimachus and the Alexandrians presents us with something of a contradiction in terms, though a contradiction whose internal tensions reflect many of the wider aesthetic, moral, and political conflicts within the *Satires*.

The earliest satires, such as that of Ennius and Pacuvius, exist only in fragments, but seem to have constituted a very diverse genre, written in a variety of metres on a variety of subject matter. The earlier satires of Lucilius seem to have been very much in the same tradition, until he made the crucial decision to write in hexameters and thus established satire's defining generic relationship, that of being the antithesis of epic. Book 1 of Lucilius' satires presented a council of the gods following the death of the leader of the Senate, L. Cornelius Lentulus Lupus, in 125 BC in which they deliberate on how to punish Rome for his crimes and vices (Horace alludes to this in *Sat.* 2.1). This is clearly a parody of the council of the gods in Book 1 of what was then Rome's national epic, Ennius' *Annales*, where the deification of Romulus was debated. The relationship is not merely one of parody, but of distortion, perversion, and debasement. Everything which is lofty and noble in epic—the auspicious foundation of the city, the apotheosis of its king for his great virtues, the elevated diction, style, and subject matter—is negated, debased, perverted: the proposed destruction of the city, the condemnation of its leading statesman for his terrible vices; low, ugly language describing his face as being like death, jaundice, poison. Crucially, the metre is the same, metre which for a Roman conjured up associations of ideology and ethos as well as aesthetics and genre. By appropriating, deforming, and distorting epic's defining metrical form, Lucilian satire took its place as, in Morgan's phrase, epic's 'evil twin'.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, satire goes further and defines itself as a perversion of all poetry, a sort of anti-genre, and even so far as to deny that it is poetry at all. When Horace writes of his *Satires* (or *Sermones*) as 'conversational prose' (*Sat.* 1.4.42) and of his 'Muse who goes on foot' (2.6.17), he is engaging with a central aspect of the genre's identity, or rather its denial that it has a generic identity at all.

Lucilius' subject matter was extremely diverse, including not only literary criticism but minutiae of grammar and spelling. Unfortunately, the numerous but generally short fragments which survive cannot give more than a very limited sense of what his satire was really like. However, for the purposes of studying the later satire which has survived, that of Horace, Persius, and Juvenal, it is arguably less important to think about Lucilius himself and his satiric corpus than about the 'Lucilius' his successors constructed, as a founding father and model to be followed, rejected, or unsuccessfully emulated. Direct engagements with Lucilius abound in Horace's *Satires*, from the small scale of an individual name or phrase to the polemical imitation of a whole poem, such as when *Sat.* 1.5, Horace's 'Journey to Brundisium', trims down and polishes up Lucilius' 'Journey to Sicily'. Many of these reminiscences are mentioned in the Explanatory Notes, and we would doubtless identify more if more of Lucilius survived. However, Horace's 'Lucilius' is most important as a model of literary style (or its absence!) to be rejected or surpassed, and of freedom of speech (*libertas*), who cannot be lived up to. The first of these issues is addressed explicitly in *Sat.* 1.4 and 1.10, and it underpins the whole of Horace's project of redefining not only the aesthetics of satire but the

ethos of moderation which that new satiric aesthetic both symbolizes and is symbolized by. The second is directly addressed in *Sat.* 2.1 but more broadly defines the self-positioning of Horatian and indeed all post-Lucilian satire, as Persius and Juvenal follow Horace in dramatizing their aspiration to Lucilian *libertas* but also in their recognition that the constraints of their political and social environment make it impossible. Trebatius in *Sat.* 2.1 may suggest that Horace play Lucilius to Octavian's Scipio, but no matter how close to the centre of power Horace gets, he has neither the social standing nor political autonomy of his satiric predecessor, and the world of triumviral and Augustan Rome is very different from the Republic of the late second century. Both these issues will be considered in more detail under the headings of literary criticism and politics respectively.

It remains to be said, if indeed it needs to be said, that satire is funny. Much of its humour derives from the incongruities generated by its debasement of higher genres, as lofty motifs or figures are brought jarringly down to the level of the gutter. When Lucretius' noble personification of Nature urging man to cease clinging to life is transformed into a talking penis asking why its owner insists on thrusting it into 'a cunt descended from a great consul' (*Sat.* 1.2.68–71) or the great seer Tiresias advises the epic hero Ulysses, not how to achieve his homecoming from Troy to Ithaca, but how to ingratiate himself into a childless old woman's will, the effect is amusing as well as dissonant. Humour, particularly cruel, mocking humour, is also a means of stressing the undesirability of the target's behaviour and encouraging the reader and society as a whole to collude in laughing at and condemning him. Yet Horace particularly emphasizes the role of humour in satire as a means of conveying his serious message—'what's the harm in using humour to put across what is true, just as teachers sometimes offer their pupils biscuits to coax them into wanting to learn their ABC?' (*Sat.* 1.1.24–6)—and in palliating satire's potentially bitter invective, as when Trebatius predicts Horace's ultimate escape from the dangers the satirist incurs: 'Then the case will be laughed out of court, and you'll get off scot-free' (*Sat.* 2.1.86). The gentle humour of Horatian satire, in contrast to the bitter invective of Lucilius, is ultimately embodied in the figure of Priapus, who expels the witches, not with his customarily aggressive threat of rape, but with an amusing, but innocuous, fart.

### ***Epistolary moments***

The *Epistles* have a great deal in common with the *Satires* and can indeed be considered as falling within the genre of satire. They are written in hexameters whose versification would be too rough round the edges for epic; they are conversational in tone and structure; they deal with moral questions, focused on the antithesis of town and country; and they are marked by the prominence of a fully characterized authorial voice or persona. Yet, as their name suggests, they are also, crucially, letters. The tradition of poetic letters went back to archaic Greece, and many poets, including Catullus, include examples in their oeuvre. However, the composition of an entire collection of poetic epistles seems to have been an innovation by Horace, uniquely in a poet the rest of whose career consisted of being the new Lucilius, or, in the *Epodes* and *Odes* respectively, the Roman Archilochus or Alcaeus. Horace's choice of the letter form is also influenced by other literary antecedents, notably the tradition of philosophical letters, including those attributed to Plato and those actually written by Epicurus, and more recently Cicero's decision to collect and publish his own correspondence with Atticus. But Horace's *Epistles* are far more than an amalgam of these varied antecedents. Many of the themes and features which they share with the *Satires*, above all their preoccupation with ethics, will be discussed below, but it is worth taking a moment to consider the importance to the *Epistles* that they *are* epistles.

Letters are a very private and personal form of communication between two individuals, whose content can be determined by the specific purpose of the correspondence but may also ramble through the topics which the writer wishes to discuss without the concern for formal unity or cohesion that literary texts tend to demand. Horace emphasizes the privacy of letters, so apt for his retreat both from the composition of lyric and from any involvement in public affairs, even when communicating with the powerful, such as Augustus' stepson Tiberius. He is writing in a register which is both appropriate to his epistolary form and to his increasing desire for a life of seclusion and *otium* (leisure) on his Sabine farm. When there is an emphasis on the distance travelled by an epistle, it is not on the separation of lovers (as in Ovid's *Heroides*) or even of friends, but on the gap—philosophical as well as physical—between the countryside and the city, as when Horace the lover of the countryside writes to Fuscus the lover of the city (*Ep.* 1.10), or to his patron Maecenas to explain why he has not returned to the city as promised (1.7), or when, in a pointed reversal, he writes from the city to his city-loving bailiff who is stuck in the countryside (1.14). He also exploits and subverts the conventions of letter-writing, from those which determine the form of the whole letter, like the recommendation Septimius has solicited against Horace's will (1.9) or the charming dinner invitation to Torquatus (1.5), to formal details such as the conventional wish for health which so resonates with Horace's desire for a healthy soul (e.g. 1.6.67), or the identification of where the letter has been written, as when Horace ends his letter to Fuscus in praise of the countryside with a reminder that he is 'dictating these lines to you behind Vacuna's crumbling shrine'. Finally, letters are explicitly written texts, unlike the *Odes* with their fiction of sung performance, or even the conversational *Satires*, and as such share many of the qualities of the written poetry which they actually are. Horace draws attention to this in *Ep.* 1.20, even though in itself it breaks the fiction of epistolarity by addressing the poetry book as though it were a slave-boy. The meditation on the uncontrollability of the written word once it has been published and sent out into the world is one which could apply to almost any literary work, but gains particular resonance because the same is also true of letters.

### ***Finding Horace: persona, face, and autobiography***

Both the *Satires* and the *Epistles* feature a very strongly characterized personal voice which identifies itself as Q. Horatius Flaccus, reinforcing this impression of a real person not only by the myriad incidental and trivial details which produce an *effet de réalité* through their very triviality, but by making Horace, his life and opinions, the central focus of the poems. This powerfully persuasive presentation, compounded by the particularly post-Romantic tendency to read first-person texts as confessional and autobiographical, led many critics to read the Horace of the *Satires* and *Epistles* (and even to some extent of the *Odes*) as the 'real' Horace. The reaction to this tendency came with the argument that ancient authors tended to construct *personae* (lit. 'masks'), who spoke in the first person and could even be identified by the name of the historical author, but were nevertheless fictional characters constructed through allusive, generic, rhetorical, and other literary means. Thus Horace (or 'the satirist', as the persona might be called to differentiate him from the historical author) is a character derived from allusions to Cynic diatribe, comedy old and new, as well of course as Lucilian satire.

More sophisticated than a straightforwardly autobiographical approach though this unquestionably is, it also has its limitations. It runs the risk of assuming an equally 'real' person behind the mask, whereas even in 'real life', individuals generate (and have generated for them) complex and varying *personae*, which



also take their existence from allusion, be it to literary texts or to conventional conceptions of ‘types’. For this reason, it may be more useful to think in terms of what Ellen Oliensis calls ‘face’, the differing aspects and constructions of one’s self which one presents to the world, depending in Horace’s case partly on the genre in which he is currently writing (so the aggressive iambist will have a different ‘face’ from the genial lyricist) and partly on the social situation in which he is writing, including, perhaps most importantly, whom he is addressing, whether Maecenas or a young protégé, an old friend or a passing acquaintance, a slave or Augustus.<sup>4</sup>

However, it is not only the general methodological issues which make the use of persona theory problematic when approaching the *Satires* and *Epistles*; it is the texts’ own insistence on the centrality of Horace’s character and autobiography, the very insistence which led to the autobiographical approach in the first place. This is not, of course, to say that we need automatically take passages such as Horace’s anecdotes about his father in *Sat.* 1.4 and 1.6 at face value. Rather, Horace emphatically and insistently places an autobiographical approach at the centre of his own satiric project, even going so far as to implicate Lucilius in the same practice when he claims that ‘In earlier days he used to entrust his secrets to his books, as if to trusted friends, not turning to any other source at all, whether things went badly for him or well; and so it comes about that the old fellow’s entire life lies open to view, as if it were painted on a votive tablet’ (*Sat.* 2.1.30–4). Likewise the source of his satiric technique is not his reading of Lucilius but the positive and negative exemplars which his father pointed out to him as a boy. In the *Epistles*, as we have seen, the very form of the poetry emphasizes the private, the personal, and the confessional. Horace plays with such ‘fragments of autobiography’ and their interplay with his various satiric masks in such a way that certainty about his identity is never possible.

### ***Politics and society***

The *Satires* and *Epistles* were written in the course of some of the largest political changes which Rome ever underwent. *Satires* 1 was published around 35 BC, when memories of the civil wars between Caesar and Pompey, and between Caesar’s assassins and his ‘avengers’ were still painfully fresh, especially for Horace, who had fought in the latter on the ‘wrong side’ with Brutus at the battle of Philippi. At this time Octavian (the future Augustus) was master of Italy, but still only one of three ‘triumvirs’, in a constant power struggle with Mark Antony which repeatedly swung from reconciliation to the brink of outright war and back again, and the war with Sextus Pompeius, Pompey’s surviving son, had only just been concluded. None of these events is referred to; indeed, Philippi and the meetings between Antony and Octavian at Brundisium and Tarentum are glaringly *not* referred to in 1.7 and 1.5, even when the context seems to be crying out for it. By the time of the publication of *Satires* 2 in around 30 BC, Octavian had defeated Antony at Actium and in Alexandria, and was sole master of the Roman world, already beginning to establish himself as *princeps*, or first citizen, with power and influence which, while not without partial precedents, were nevertheless very new at Rome. Horace’s silence on this is even more deafening. *Epistles* 1 was published in 20 BC, when Augustus (as he now was) had ‘restored the *res publica*’ and firmly established his dominance over Roman politics, but the letters flutter around the edges of power, addressing relatively insignificant young men and older friends, men who are in Tiberius’ entourage or stewarding the Sicilian estates of Augustus’ right-hand man, Agrippa. Their explicit emphasis on retreat, not only from lyric poetry but from public life, adds to their preoccupation with social interactions and, retreating still further, an almost internalized fixation on

how to live well. Even when writing an epistle to Augustus himself, Horace's focus is on literary rather than political matters.

This is surprising. Roman satire was a profoundly political genre, or at least it constantly harked back to a time when it had been. Horace cites Eupolis, Cratinus, and Aristophanes, the three great poets of Athenian Old Comedy, as the principal models for Lucilian satire. Many readers (and viewers) of Old Comedy might mainly think of its *political* attacks on figures like Cleon and Pericles. But Horace reinvents them as *social* satirists, figures with freedom (*libertas*), but who attacked 'anyone who deserved to be marked down for his wicked and thieving ways, for being an adulterer or an assassin, or in any other way notorious' (*Sat.* 1.4.3–5). Lucilius himself is portrayed as someone who fearlessly (and with *libertas*) attacked some of the most powerful politicians of his day, such as Metellus and Lupus, and who 'fastened on the leaders of the people, too, tribe by tribe, showing favour to Virtue alone, of course, and to her friends' (*Sat.* 2.1.67–70). Yet for all the flattering parallels drawn between Lucilius' protector Scipio and his friend Laelius, and Octavian and Maecenas, for all the slightly hysterical, protesting-too-much insistence on his satire's power to re-enact Lucilian *libertas*, to strip away the skin of his contemporaries and reveal the rottenness within, it is Trebatius' warnings about the dangers of writing satire, at best being frozen out by the powerful, at worst having a short life, which eventually prevail. For all the countless named characters in the *Satires*, there is no modern-day Lupus or Metellus whom Horace attacks, not even a Mark Antony or a Sextus Pompeius. The reader is left puzzled as to just how political Horace's *Satires* are, and why?

Of course, one need not interpret politics narrowly as concerning only political leaders and the business of government as conducted in the Senate and assemblies (or indeed Augustus' palace). Politics is that which relates to the *polis* (city-state), and can include all aspects of how citizens behave and relate to each other. In an influential article, Ian DuQuesnay argued that the social and moral behaviour which *Satires* 1 in particular promotes and condemns is associated respectively with Octavian, Maecenas, and their political allies, and their opponents, including Sextus and Antony.<sup>5</sup> Certainly Horace depicts a world in which there has been a move from a chaos created by disruptive forces to greater harmony and order, but one which is still at threat from renewed irruption of such forces, whether on a large or small scale.

This model could be used to interpret almost any of the attacks on 'wrong' behaviour, from gluttony to adultery (both charges, incidentally, made elsewhere against Antony), and the concomitant advocacy of its 'correct' antithesis, but it can perhaps be most clearly seen in two of Horace's 'anecdotal' satires. In *Sat.* 1.8, the grisly Esquiline Hill, a cemetery littered with the bones of civil war, has been civilized by Maecenas through the construction of that ultimate symbol of the harnessing of nature by culture, and of regrowth from decay, a garden. Yet this order is threatened by the dark, irrational forces represented by the witches Canidia and Sagana, a threat which is dispelled by an explosive fart by the statue of the god Priapus, a symbol of the power of gently comic Horatian satire. In the next satire, one of Horace's most engaging and enjoyable, his quiet walk through Rome is threatened by an importunate and persistent 'chatterbox'. However, this is not a harmlessly annoying bore, but a social climber determined to wangle an introduction into the circle of Maecenas, which he assumes is full of ambitious, back-biting opportunists like himself, and which he threatens to disrupt and pervert by promising to help Horace rise at others' expense. Again, a sudden and comical intervention—the arrival of the chatterbox's legal opponent—dispels the threat. The overwhelmingly social and moral vices and follies which Horace attacks can thus be read as both aspects and symbols of larger political evils, and satire can play a part in policing them.

Yet for all that, many readers of the *Satires* still have the constant feeling that Horace is self-consciously *not* writing about politics. On one level, this could be the same picture looked at from the opposite perspective. The mild, integrative approach focusing on moral and social ills replaces the aggressive, scathing Lucilian voice addressing political concerns, not because it reflects the sunny spirit of reconciliation and coalition, the ‘new politics’ of a (not quite) post-civil war era, but because under the constraints of that new political reality, which is post-civil war because only one man has been left standing, Horace *cannot* write about politics with Lucilian vigour and freedom. This perspective on Horace’s reinvention of the political identity of satire—running parallel with his reinvention of its ethics as those of moderation and of its poetics as those of Callimachean polish and restraint—is supported by two pervasive strands of imagery, both relating to the curtailment of freedom (of speech and more generally): poor vision and silence.

Throughout *Satires* 1 in particular, various characters and particularly Horace suffer from defective vision and especially conjunctivitis (*lippitudo*). Sometimes, as with the Stoic philosopher Crispinus (*Sat.* 1.1.120) or the man who is critical of his friends’ faults but blind to his own (1.3.25), this is a symbol of limited or distorted perception, an inability to ‘see’ things as they are. More frequently, however, it marks a convenient but necessary refusal by Horace to see things which it is unsafe or at least unpolitic to see, what we might in similar terms call ‘turning a blind eye’. This is most evident in the frustratingly tantalizing description of (or failure to describe) the journey to Brundisium in *Sat.* 1.5. As noted above, Horace cuts the poem short when they reach Brundisium, either before the crucial meeting between Octavian and Antony took place (if the poem is set in 38 BC), or even before they reached their actual goal of Tarentum, where the second meeting was held the next year. Yet even along the way, Horace uses the smokescreen of Callimachean, anti-Lucilian poetics to omit and pass over any events of political interest or importance. Instead of talk about Cleopatra or Sextus, we get lovelorn bargees and pretentious town-clerks. Like the wet dream Horace has at Trivicum when his date fails to turn up, the reader is led on with the promise of fulfilment but, frustrated, has to make do with an empty (anti)climax. One of the reasons for Horace’s failure to deliver is that he could not see anything. Early in the journey, at Anxur, we are told ‘I apply some black ointment on my eyes, which were giving me trouble’ (1.5.30–1). Both the existing conjunctivitis and the smearing of the ointment give Horace an excuse for not seeing what he should not, an excuse he notably employs at Capua, when Maecenas intriguingly goes off ‘to amuse himself’; Horace does not join him because ‘ball games don’t agree with those who suffer from sore eyes (*lippis*)’ (line 49) and thus both he and his readers are left in frustrating but safe ignorance of the political games Maecenas is playing. The fearless Lucilian satirist cannot be expected to describe political events if he cannot even see them.

Closely related to this imagery of vision is that of speech and silence. Horace routinely criticizes those who talk or write too much. Although this is couched in terms of being an aesthetic flaw of Lucilius, who composed two hundred lines in an hour standing on one leg, and social ineptitude on the part of the ‘chatterbox’, who almost fulfils the Sabine soothsayer’s prediction by talking Horace to death, it can very easily be interpreted as part of Horace’s anxieties about the effects of too much free speech and loose talk, and his emphasis on the need for discretion, especially in dealings with the great and powerful. In place of the Lucilian *libertas* which not only enabled but demanded full and abundant, as well as frank and often venomous, speech, Horace stresses silence. When he does talk, it is about trivialities and side issues; about important political matters he maintains that silence. In *Sat.* 1.7, the inconsequential battle of words (perhaps the closest Horace comes to the venom of Lucilian satire) between Rupilius Rex and Persius stands

in for the much more interesting and important conflict in which Brutus was involved in the late 40s, but about which Horace cannot or will not speak, even though, or precisely because, he was involved: the battle of Philippi. And instead of the assassination of Julius Caesar, we get an uncomfortable pun alluding to it, but simultaneously emphasizing its absence; killing 'Kings' is nothing new to Brutus, but not in this satire, which will not speak of such things. The unmentionable subject of civil war looms small even in the *Epistles*, where Horace advises Lollius to fit in with all his patron's fads but also to find some private time for himself; only there, in the seclusion of his own estate, away from the constraining presence of the powerful, can he and his brother re-enact the battle of Actium when brother fought brother in bloody civil war (*Ep.* 1.18.61–4). Horace may make a virtue of his silence on matters which are, for whatever reason, best left unspoken, and the varied responses to civic upheaval from the amnesty following the rule of the Thirty Tyrants in classical Athens to modern South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission show that there is no single solution to the trauma incurred. However, in choosing the genre of *libertas* to exercise his restraint and discretion, Horace has drawn troubling attention to what he is not saying.

The example of Lollius in *Ep.* 1.18 also raises one of the most important social and political issues in both the external reality of Horace's life and the constructed world of his *Satires* and *Epistles* (however we want to read the relationship between the two), that of patronage. The reciprocal relationship between a wealthy, powerful, and socially elevated *patronus* and a *cliens* less fortunate in those three respects, in which *officia* (obligatory favours and services) were performed by each party—food, money, dinner invitations, protection from the patron, morning greetings (*salutationes*), accompaniment around the city to increase prestige, political and even violent support from the client—was a central institution of Roman society. Some poets, especially non-Romans such as the Archias made famous by Cicero, were in this dependent position as clients; but many, like Virgil, Propertius, and Tibullus (and indeed many non-poets like Lollius) were of high social status already, and became a different sort of client, certainly receiving gifts like other clients and reciprocating by commemorating their patrons in verse, even if only in a brief address, but without the sense of economic dependency or social inferiority. A very particular example of this scenario came into being during Octavian's rise to prominence, when his ally Maecenas, a cultured equestrian who always refused official political office, became the 'patron' of poets including Virgil, Horace, and Propertius. In many ways, this was a form of political patronage, as Virgil and Horace at least became part of the Augustan establishment and to some extent at least (however far one wishes to read coded subversion into their poetry) wrote works such as the *Georgics*, *Epodes*, *Odes*, and *Aeneid* as *officia* as much for Augustus and his new *res publica* as for Maecenas.

Horace's case was more complex still, since his involvement at Philippi on the side of Brutus and Cassius seems to have led to the confiscation of his property, leaving him in need certainly of political rehabilitation and perhaps of economic support. Horace himself gives a version of his introduction into Maecenas' circle in *Sat.* 1.6, representing it as a kind of religious initiation and even rebirth as he is sent away for nine months before being acknowledged by his new 'father', a parallel figure to his real father whose attention to Horace's education is described immediately afterwards. The relationship with Maecenas is prominent throughout the *Satires* and *Epistles* 1 (as well as the *Epodes* and *Odes*) as Horace constructs a complex combination of grateful obligation and genuine affection (the Latin *amicitia* could mean both 'friendship' and 'patronage'). Maecenas is the man who gave Horace his Sabine farm, source of his leisure and escape from the turmoil of the city, who reintegrated the ranting outsider of the diatribes into the



civil society in which he finds himself by the end of *Satires* 1, a group of cultured, like-minded friends such as Horace praises in 1.9 and 1.10. Yet he is also a major player in the high politics of Octavian's Rome, someone whose secrets are not to be allowed to dribble from a 'leaky ear' (*Sat.* 2.6.46), and hence another of the constraints upon Horace's satiric *libertas*. He is a man who can be demanding of his friend's time and presence (*Ep.* 1.7), whose patronage is not like, but must be carefully prevented from becoming like, the disastrous gifts bestowed by the advocate Philippus on the spry auctioneer Mena. Horace's reflections on the appropriate behaviour of a good client, especially when he advises Scaeva (*Ep.* 1.17) and Lollius (1.18) on how to fit in with the wishes and predilections of their patrons, can feel quite unpalatable to a modern reader, which makes it difficult to judge how far Horace in a contemporary context is also challenging the institution. Yet, particularly in the beast fables, when the vixen finds that she has grown too fat to escape from the granary (*Ep.* 1.7.29–33), or when the horse defeats the stag by accepting a rider, but then cannot free himself of his new master (*Ep.* 1.10.34–8), the desire for an unattainable freedom can certainly be heard.

### ***How to live well—philosophy and ethics***

Ethics, broadly defined, is arguably the main preoccupation of the *Satires* and certainly of *Epistles* 1. Regardless of how far we see Horace's emphasis on moral issues as either part of a political message or a way of reneging on political engagement, it is undeniable that the issue of how to live well, and how far various philosophical schools can help or hinder that, is at the heart of Horace's hexameter poetry.

The influence of and allusions to various schools of philosophy litter the *Satires* and *Epistles*, and indeed Horace's explicitly denies doctrinaire adherence to any one school, insisting that 'there's no master I'm bound to swear loyalty to' (*Ep.* 1.1.14). The anarchic denial of society embodied in Cynicism, as much an anti-philosophy as a philosophy, offers at least the formal model for the diatribes of *Sat.* 1.1–3, with their debt to the Cynic diatribes of Bion of Borysthenes. Also, the first Cynic, Diogenes, is ridiculed as the type of the boor with a deluded belief in his own independence in contrast to the pragmatic adaptability of Aristippus in *Ep.* 1.17. The presence of Platonic philosophy is mainly felt in the dialogue form of *Satires* 2 and in Horace's new role as, in W. S. Anderson's phrase, 'the Roman Socrates'.<sup>6</sup> Pythagoreanism is only good for a couple of jokes at the expense of the easy target of the transmigration of souls. The principal players in Horace's philosophical circus are Stoicism and Epicureanism.

Stoicism is the main philosophical target of Horace's ridicule. An adapted form of Stoicism was extremely popular at Rome, since many of its ideals of the restraint of emotion, endurance, and public service, and its belief in a providential divine order, fitted well with existing Roman values. Yet its more extreme and unusual tenets were often the object of derision, as when Cicero lampoons Cato the younger for his Stoic beliefs in the *Pro Murena*. Certainly its tendency towards extremes and absolutes rendered it the polar opposite to the relaxed moderation advocated in the *Satires*. Though references are scattered throughout, it is particularly in *Sat.* 1.3, 2.3, and 2.7 that Horace engages in an extended attack on Stoic doctrine. In 1.3, after a complex, loosely structured 'argument' about inconsistency and people's tendency to be soft on themselves but hard on others, the Stoic doctrine that all crimes are equal is exposed to scrutiny and ridicule. In 2.3, the bankrupt dealer in luxury goods, Damasippus, has been saved from suicide and converted to Stoicism by the philosopher Stertinius, whose long diatribe on the doctrine that everyone except the wise man (*sapiens*) is mad he recites. Finally, in 2.7, Horace's slave Davus takes advantage of the licence of the

Saturnalia when slaves were able to speak freely to their masters (the very freedom Horace so notably lacks) to criticize Horace's inconsistency, arguing, on the basis of doctrine he has picked up from a Stoic philosopher's doorkeeper, that, since everyone except the wise man is a slave, Horace is the same as him.

As elsewhere in *Satires* 2, Horace's retreat from the foreground to let his interlocutors make their case adds another layer of complication, especially since in both these satires the main speaker is recounting a perhaps garbled version of something they have heard from another source. On a simple level, one might expect the use of a characterized mouthpiece to undermine the message in a more obvious way than the problematic characterization of the first-person satiric persona of *Satires* 1, and indeed Damasippus and Davus are both marked by a self-serving quality intermingled with their fanaticism. However, it is also striking how many of the blows which they aim at Horace hit home, undermining further the moral authority of his constructed persona, and especially how much the rants of these fanatics have in common with the rants of the fanatical diatribist in *Sat.* 1.1–3; in particular, Davus' ridicule of Horace's preference for adulterous sex with aristocratic women over uncomplicated relief with a cheap prostitute is astonishingly similar to Horace's own attack on *others'* similar preferences in *Sat.* 1.2. Both Horace's moral authority and the consistency of his philosophical outlook are undermined.

Epicureanism was much less congenial to Romans with traditional values. Quite apart from the complexities of its atomist physics, it denied that the gods played any part in human affairs, for good or ill, or that the soul had any existence after death, thus opposing traditional Roman religion; it advocated a life of seclusion and non-involvement in politics, antithetical to the Roman ideal of public service and the Roman reality of insatiable political ambition. Yet in a more or less watered down version, it was followed by a number of leading Romans such as the politician Calpurnius Piso and the great survivor of the late Republic, Atticus. Horace himself may have been connected with a group of Epicureans based by the Bay of Naples which was centred on Philodemus and included Virgil, Varius Rufus, and Plotius Tucca (grouped as Horace's friends—friendship was also a key aspect of Epicureanism—at *Sat.* 1.5.40 and 1.10.81). Certainly there is an Epicurean tone to his emphasis on moderation and his rejection of extreme Stoic doctrines, his delight in retreat from the city and its bustling preoccupations with political and commercial business, and his rejection of conventional political ambition; indeed, he signs off his epistle (*Ep.* 1.4) to Albius as 'a porker from Epicurus' herd', though with his tongue firmly in his cheek and more than a glance at the distorted view of Epicureanism as hedonistic. It would be a gross exaggeration to see Horace as an Epicurean poet, but it is a softened version of this philosophy which most closely resembles the dominant tone of his poetry.

Unlike Stoicism, Epicureanism was closely associated with a particular literary text and this influenced Horace's engagement both with that text and with the philosophy it espoused. In the 50s BC Lucretius wrote one of the greatest and most challenging poems in Latin, *On the nature of the universe* (*De rerum natura*), setting out an explanation of Epicurean physics with a view to curing men's wonder at and fear of death, the gods, and natural phenomena, so that they could achieve the Epicurean ideal of *ataraxia* ('freedom from anxiety'). The poem was immensely influential and poets of the next and subsequent generations endlessly engaged with it, whether in concord or opposition. Alluding to Lucretius could serve as a shorthand for endorsing Epicurean ideas (even though Virgil in the *Georgics* used allusion to Lucretius to oppose him) and the *Satires* in particular are full of references, as the Explanatory Notes will show. To give but two examples, the end of *Sat.* 1.1 notes the rarity of a man 'who quits life in contentment when his time is up, like a guest who has dined well', echoing Lucretius' famous image from the diatribe against the fear of death in *De rerum natura*

3 of life as a banquet which we should contentedly leave when sated, while the second half of *Sat.* 1.2 is full of allusions to the diatribe against passionate love at the end of *De rerum natura* 4. Yet allusions even to Lucretian Epicureanism are often more complex and less straightforwardly affirmative, as in the adaptation of Lucretius' condemnation of the use of pet names for the beloved which disguise their flaws to argue that people *should* use such palliating names for their friends. Most puzzling of all is the sustained engagement with Lucretius in *Sat.* 2.4, where the lecture on gastronomy recounted by Catus is full of allusions to *De rerum natura*; this might be part of the ridicule of the science of cooking's aspiration to the level of natural philosophy, a rebuttal of the distorted view of Epicureanism which read its emphasis on pleasure as a call to hedonism, or perhaps an undermining of the privileged position which that philosophy seems to hold elsewhere in the *Satires*.

The philosophy of the *Epistles*, as has been noted, is not drawn in doctrinaire fashion from any particular school, and Horace is explicit about his own inconsistency in this respect: 'Sometimes I become active and take the plunge into civic life, an unwavering guardian and attendant of true virtue [i.e. a Stoic]; sometimes unconsciously I slip back into the rules of Aristippus and I try to place circumstances under my control, not vice versa [a Cyrenaic]' (*Ep.* 1.16–19). Many of the *Epistles*, with their rejection of ambition and embrace of retreat and seclusion, continue the broadly Epicurean tone of the *Satires*, but what is most striking about these very philosophical poems is the way in which they reject formal philosophy as the best means of living well. At the opening of *Ep.* 1.2, Horace tells Lollius that he has been learning about ethics, not from the philosophers Chrysippus and Crantor, but from rereading Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Throughout the rest of the collection, Horace consistently uses Homeric exempla, tendentiously interpreted, to support his ethical arguments, as when Ulysses' crew are (unjustly) used as a paradigm of those who put too much emphasis on the pleasures of food, because they killed and ate the cattle of the Sun (*Ep.* 1.6.63–4). Other poems too are similarly employed, using no less tendentious and even distorting interpretations, as when the assertion of Dionysus in Euripides' *Bacchae* that the god will free him is taken as meaning he will die and be liberated from the constraints of human life (*Ep.* 1.16.73–9). In part, of course, this is a self-reflexive exercise, since the *Epistles*, despite a disingenuous claim not to be, are themselves poetry, and poetry which can be used as a means of working out how to live well, part of Horace's wider concern, in the *Odes* as well as the hexameter poems, with the role of the poet in society.

One last issue, which also connects ethics with poetry, is the way in which Horace does not merely argue that reading the didactic content of poetry can help in the quest to live well, but uses poetics and aesthetics as symbols and metaphors for the right way to live. As has been noted before, the Callimachean aesthetic ideals of finely wrought, small-scale poetry, in antithesis to the bloated messiness of Lucilian satire, can be read as parallel to the Horatian insistence on moderation and the avoidance of extremes and excess. The implicit connection between the two comes closest to being explicit at *Sat.* 1.1.54–60:

It's as if, when you needed no more water than a jug or cup holds, you were to say, 'I'd prefer to take what I need from a great river than from this little spring, though the amount is the same.' The result of this is that people who crave more than their fair share are carried off by fierce Aufidus, swept away together with the bank they stand on. However, the man whose small desires match his needs doesn't swallow water thickened by mud or forfeit his life among the waves.

This recalls the famous passage at the end of Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*, where the god espouses the virtue

of the pure spring, representing small-scale, polished poetry, over that of the great muddy river (there the Euphrates), representing overlong, unpolished epic. The allusion to a symbol of poetics in a passage discussing ethics draws the parallel between the two, a parallel which is reinforced when Horace later uses the image of the muddy river more conventionally to describe the un-Callimachean poetics of Lucilius (*Sat.* 1.4.11 and 1.10.50–1). Ethics, poetics, and indeed politics all intersect, or rather stand as parallel metaphors for each other as Horace—quite literally—espouses moderation in all things.

### ***Literary criticism***

Literary criticism was already a feature of Lucilius' satire and it is pervasive in Horace's. In the *Satires* themselves, the principal engagement is with the theory and practice of satire itself, in terms both of the technical manipulation of metre and diction, and the social implications of its moral stance and invective tone, though satire is measured on these criteria against other genres, such as epic and comedy. In all of these areas, Lucilius is held up as the model who is simultaneously to be emulated for his positive qualities but also regarded as falling short in care, technique, and stylistic polish. As has been noted, Horace's rejection of these aspects of Lucilius' poetic technique in favour of the 'Callimachean' approach favoured by the Alexandrians and their imitators at Rome has both a political and ethical dimension alongside the aesthetic.

Horace's second book of *Epistles* (if indeed he intended them to be considered as a book, for which there is no compelling evidence) is overwhelmingly, almost exclusively concerned with literary criticism. The *Epistle to Augustus* is an extended attack on the alleged contemporary vogue for archaic Roman poetry, with all its imperfections of style and form, in preference to the more polished efforts of modern poets. The parallels to the criticism of Lucilius in *Satires*. I can clearly be seen, but in the negotiation of old and new, particularly in a letter to the *princeps* who revived the values of the good old days but also boasted of his modernizing building programme, finding Rome made of brick and leaving it made of marble, it is tempting to see a moral and political dimension to this question of aesthetics too. The *Epistle to Florus* contains a more thoroughgoing interweaving of issues of ethics and poetics, as it explores the poet's place in society. Horace affects to justify his failure to reply to Florus' letter or to write more lyric poetry, and his reasons range from the mundane, that he does not need the money he would earn from composition, through a reflection on the gap between what a poet should be and what too often in practice he is, to a position very similar to that of *Epistles* 1, that he must now put away the childish things of lyric and concentrate on the pursuit of more philosophical goals, including once again how to live well.

The *Epistle to the Pisos: The Art of Poetry (Ars Poetica)* is perhaps Horace's most influential work, but also his hardest to appreciate. Its authority and influence on subsequent theories of literary criticism are matched only by Aristotle's *Poetics*, but it is difficult to balance its status as a treatise on poetics with its being a poem and a letter. The presence of the addressees in the letter, (probably) L. Calpurnius Piso and his two sons, is faint and Horace rarely exploits features of epistolary form as he had in *Epistles* 1. According to the ancient commentator Porphyrio, Horace drew on a work by one Neoptolemus of Bithynia and, though this cannot ultimately be proven, it certainly belongs to a long tradition of literary criticism and demands to be read in that context as much as in that of Horace's other satiric works. Its subject matter ranges widely, taking in issues such as unity, structure, the role of the poet in society, and an extensive discussion of the history and nature of drama. No summary can do it justice and it is best appreciated by being read. Yet some remarks can be made about its overall character. It is a conservative work, privileging decorum and canons of ac-



ceptable taste over what others might consider the exuberance and energy of baroque fantasy and radical innovation. The famous opening image of the painting with the head of a woman, the neck of a horse, and the tail of a fish is explicitly meant to be absurd and risible, but such iconoclastic hybrids might well appear attractively bizarre to tastes different from Horace's. We might detect yet again in Horace's aesthetics a parallel to the ethics and politics of his earlier *Satires* and *Epistles*, where moderation and the avoidance of extremes is the ideal, an ideal which might also be interpreted as a reluctance to step out of line and cause offence. But before the *Ars Poetica* begins to sound dry and severe, it is also important to stress how close to the spirit of satire it remains, with its exuberant language and imagery, its unexpected and striking transitions, and above all its mordantly ironic tone. This last feature is perhaps best experienced in the astonishing conclusion to the poem (and probably to Horace's entire oeuvre) with the depiction of the mad poet, being teased by children, falling down wells, like Empedocles jumping into Mt. Etna, and finally embracing the reader in a bear hug at a recitation and refusing to let him go. One last time Horace tells the truth while laughing as he depicts this crazed behaviour of the 'wrong' sort of poet at the very moment when he himself—decorously and sanely—lets his reader go.

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## CHRONOLOGICAL SURVEY

BC	(Early dates traditional)
1090	Fall of Troy.
753	Foundation of Rome by Romulus.
510	Expulsion of the Tarquins.
509	Creation of Roman Republic.
264–241	First Punic War.
218–201	Second Punic War.
218	Hannibal crosses the Alps.
202	Scipio Africanus Maior defeats Carthaginians at Zama.
149–146	Third Punic War.
146	Scipio Africanus Minor destroys Carthage.
70	Birth of Virgil.
65	Birth of Horace.
63	Birth of Octavian.
59	First Triumvirate: Caesar, Crassus, and Pompey.
53	Crassus defeated by Parthians at Carrhae.
44	Caesar assassinated.
43	Second Triumvirate: Antony, Lepidus, and Octavian.
42	Defeat of Brutus and Cassius at Philippi.
39	Virgil, <i>Eclogues</i> .
38	Virgil introduces Horace to Maecenas.
37–36	War against Sextus Pompeius.
35	Horace, <i>Satires</i> 1.
33?	Horace receives Sabine farm.

- 31 Octavian defeats Antony and Cleopatra at Actium.
- 30 Death of Antony and Cleopatra in Alexandria.
- 30? Horace, *Epodes*.  
Horace, *Satires* 2.
- 29 Virgil, *Georgics*.  
Triple triumph of Octavian.
- 28 Temple of Palatine Apollo dedicated.  
Propertius, *Elegies* 1.
- 27 Octavian takes the name Augustus.
- 26 Tibullus, *Elegies* 1.
- 26–5 Augustus campaigns in Spain.
- 23 Horace, *Odes* 1–3.
- 23 Propertius, *Elegies* 2–3.
- 20 Restoration of Crassus' standards and prisoners taken at Carrhae.  
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- 19 Death of Virgil. *Aeneid* published posthumously.  
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- 18 Julian Laws.
- 17 Secular Games and Horace's *Carmen Saeculare* (*Secular Hymn*).
- 16 Propertius, *Elegies* 4.
- 16–13 Augustus in Gaul and Spain.
- 15 Raeti and Vindelici defeated by Drusus and Tiberius.
- 13 Horace, *Odes* 4.
- 12? Horace, *Epistle to Augustus* (2.1).
- 10? Horace, *Epistle to the Pisos* (*Ars Poetica*).
- 8 Death of Maecenas and Horace.
- AD 14 Death of Augustus.